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SALARIES AND EFFICIENCY

CHARLES N. SMILEY
Iowa College, Grinnell, Iowa

On the fifth of January, 1907, the Board of Education in the city of Chicago decided not to raise the salaries of the office boys in the employ of the board to \$800 a year. The reason for this decision was the fact that there were teachers in the public schools of Chicago who did not receive that large a salary. It is a hopeful sign, if society is at last awaking to the fact that the function of the teacher is at least as important as the function of the office boy. This high sentiment does not prevail, however, throughout the length and breadth of the land. During the Christmas holidays, at the State Teachers' Association of Iowa, I heard a paper read in which the author suggested that there should be a law in Iowa to the effect that no teacher should receive less than \$35 a month, or \$280 a year. And yet the politicians in Iowa, and in all the states of the Middle West where similar conditions obtain, dare to tell us that our schools are as good as any schools, and that they are as good as they need be. In his last message to the state legislature the reform governor of Missouri made an oblique statement to the effect that Missouri was spending more money on her public schools than any other state in the Union. He made an oblique statement to that effect—a statement from which the casual reader would infer that Missouri was most generous of all the states in its expenditure for public education.¹ The governor fully understood the subtle art of complimenting his people—of telling them in an indirect way that they were the most intelligent people in the world. For if Missouri is investing the most money in schools, the reasonable inference is that her schools are or soon will be the best, and that her teachers are or ought to be the most efficient. But let us investigate the matter

¹ The governor's statement: "The total school fund of the state amounts to \$13,325,587.76, including state, county, and township funds. This is the largest available cash school fund of any state in the Union."

and see whether the financial basis of our school system is such as to justify this sanguinity—this hopefulness on the part of our politicians. According to the last available report of ex-United States Commissioner Harris—the report for 1904, the average salary of men engaged in public-school work in the state of Massachusetts was \$148 a month, and their school year averaged almost ten months. The average salary of men doing the same work in Missouri was \$44 a month, in Ohio \$45 a month, in Iowa \$48 a month; and the average for all the states of the Middle West and South taken collectively was less than \$50 a month, and the average school year was less than seven months. If you place \$148 a month over against \$50 a month, the figures tell their own story. One does not have to be an educator to draw a conclusion from these figures; he merely has to have a moderate amount of common business sense. A salary of \$1,500 a year justifies a man in making teaching a profession; a salary of \$350 a year does not justify anything. With \$1,500 one may keep up a small life insurance, buy a few books, travel a little, have a few of the things which an efficient teacher ought to have; and yet the salary is not so large as to rob a man of that exquisite altruistic feeling that he is sacrificing his life on the altar of the common good.

But to turn more directly to one particular interest—the salary of the Latin teacher in the public high school. Our Latin has such manifest and peculiar advantages over all the other subjects of the high-school curriculum, as a means of training, discipline, and culture, that wherever it is well taught—i. e., wherever the salary is sufficient to secure the services of a thoroughly equipped teacher—the four years' Latin immediately becomes the backbone of the high-school course, and the school itself in very truth a Latin school. The people of Massachusetts are not guilty of an inaccurate use of language when they speak of the Boston Latin School, the Cambridge Latin School, the Roxbury Latin School. And it would perhaps be no case of misnomer to call by this name some of the high schools in the larger cities of the Middle West, where the salaries are not altogether inadequate. But in the towns where the population is five thousand or less—and there

are hundreds of such towns in the Mississippi Valley—the average salary of the Latin teacher in the public high school is less than \$500 a year.² What have we a right to expect for such a salary? Certainly not very much. There is no question that we are getting more than we pay for. But that does not change the general aspect of the situation. There is no reason why the prosperous Middle West should be expecting to get for \$500 service worth \$1,200 or \$1,500. And, as a matter of fact, we are not getting it. Let me cite three typical incidents that will illustrate this—incidents that have come under my observation in the past year. Last fall one of my freshmen came to me and said that he had not had a fair chance to learn Latin. He said that the principal of their home school did not know any Latin, but that he had been very anxious that their class should have a start in that subject. In order that this might be accomplished, the principal had gone down to the University of Chicago for a summer session and had studied beginning Latin. In the fall he had come back and had taught his pupils what he had learned during the summer. The next summer he studied Caesar, and the following fall taught his pupils their second-year Latin. I have a great admiration for a man who has the courage to attempt to carry out such a programme; but I feel sure that the results of his teaching will prove unsatisfactory. Another incident. A young man who graduated from our college last June was recommended, because of his administrative ability and executive force, for the principalship of a small school. He had specialized in science during his college course—had avoided language work, taking only so much of it as was absolutely necessary to meet the requirements for his science degree. He hated Latin, so he told me. And yet this fall he found himself obliged to teach the Latin classes, because he was better equipped to do it than any of the other teachers in his school. And yet he had studied Latin only two years. I do not doubt that his pupils will

² There are 194 towns in Iowa, having a population of 5,000 or less, that maintain a public high school in which Latin is taught. In 34 of these towns the Latin instructor is principal of the school; the average salary in such cases is \$675.30. In the remaining 160 schools the average salary of the instructor in Latin is \$499.64.

hate Latin—and that those who come to college will be ill-prepared to continue their work. One more incident. Last May I visited a high school in a town of one thousand population. I visited the Latin room. The teacher was a brisk young man with a good presence, an enthusiastic manner; in fact, he had all the requisites of a good teacher, except a knowledge of the subject he was teaching. In one hour he made ten serious mistakes with his beginning class; when there was occasion to use the rule for indirect discourse, he found it necessary to consult his book to find out what the rule was.

With such inefficient instruction in Latin as this in many of our smaller high schools, it is not strange that there is a general stampede to the schools of technology. It is not strange that the boys get such a dislike for the classics and literary studies that when the time comes for college they turn their backs on the liberal culture courses and go to some agricultural school or school of engineering.

Several months ago the editor of the *Classical Journal* wrote a long editorial complaining that the freshmen who came to him from year to year were inadequately prepared; he complained that their knowledge of syntax was a smattering, that in translation they were careless and inaccurate, and that when it came to prose composition they were hopelessly corrupt. The editor attributed this condition to two things: (1) that in the last fifteen or twenty years there has been invented and put into circulation a new terminology of syntax that has confused and befogged some who were accustomed to the old terminology; (2) that during this same period there has been put upon the market a new type of textbook in prose-composition, which does not lay emphasis upon systematic constructive work in syntax. There is perhaps something in both of these reasons assigned. But the real reason, I feel, lies much deeper. The Middle West has not been paying for efficient instruction in the great majority of its public high schools. In the last twenty years the secondary schools in the Mississippi Valley have been forgotten in a financial way, while a vigorous campaign has been fought for colleges and universities. This campaign has been reasonably successful. It is no longer necessary for a young man or woman to go east for

his college course or for graduate study. To be sure, there is still need of more money for higher education—for expansion along legitimate lines; but the crying need, the imperative need, of our colleges and universities is for a more liberal expenditure of money on our public high schools, in order that the great army of freshmen who come to us every year may be adequately prepared to take advantage of the instruction offered in the four-year college course.

Our educational building presents rather a grotesque appearance in its present incompleteness. It is a two-story structure. The upper story is getting to be comfortably, even sumptuously, furnished. The lower story is unfinished, is still bare and uninviting; and, strangest of all, there are very few good stairways leading to the more sumptuous upper apartments.

We congratulate ourselves that in the last fifteen years, since the report of the Committee of Ten, in which the study of Latin was so strongly indorsed, there has been an increase of 17 per cent. in the number of pupils studying Latin in the public high schools—a larger increase than for any other subject in the high-school curriculum. I am not sure that this is altogether a matter of congratulation. It means in many cases in our smaller communities that Latin has been introduced into the high schools in such a slipshod way that the community has been permanently prejudiced against the subject. This inefficiency is not due to the fact that we do not have graduate schools where teachers can be properly equipped, but to the fact that the salaries offered do not justify such training. We can never expect very large classes in the graduate courses in the classics, so long as more than 80 per cent. of our Latin teachers get less than \$500 a year, or less than the city office boy. I know a rich stockman who pays a man \$1,200 a year to care for his cattle, but he sends his daughter to a high school where the Latin teacher and the other instructors receive \$450 a year.

This stingy policy, this parsimony, has been gradually driving the men from the teachers' profession. Thirty-five years ago in Iowa 40 per cent. of the teachers in the public schools were men; today only 12 per cent. are men. And of that 12 per cent. only a fraction remain in the work permanently. Most of them

teach for three or four years, and just when they are becoming efficient turn to some work in which they can earn a living. We must admit that the criticism of the Mosely Commission is just, that there are not enough men in the public schools in America. This lack of men in the public high schools is largely responsible for the fact that many of the boys drop out of the high schools without completing the course. In the North Central states the girls in the public high schools outnumber the boys by 50,000.

Now, there are four things which we can do to help this general situation:

1. We can insist that our graduates who go out each year to teach Latin shall be as well equipped as if they were really going to get a good salary. California has set us a good example in this respect, where the new law requires that every high-school teacher shall have had at least one year's graduate work at the university.

2. We can create a sentiment for state aid for the weaker high schools, so that in the smaller communities, where the taxable property is insufficient to produce a school revenue adequate for the maintenance of a good high school, the state may step in and help. Our public-school system demands that there should be articulation between the state universities and all the public high schools. If this is not accomplished in one way, it will be in another. If the weaker high schools are not lifted to the standard of the university, the university must let down the bars and lower its admission requirements, as Wisconsin has recently done.³

3. Our Association of Teachers of Greek and Latin ought to have a legislative committee, one of whose functions shall be to keep us informed, through the columns of the *Classical Journal*, in regard to the financial side of school legislation.

4. As individuals we can help the matter along in our private and public utterances. Whenever we are called upon for a speech—whether it be a prayer-meeting talk, or an after-dinner toast, or a Fourth of July oration—we ought to find a place for the sentiment: "Gentlemen, I suggest that the salaries of the teachers in our public schools ought to be raised."

³ The bill lowering the requirements for admission at the University of Wisconsin has passed the lower house; it may not pass the senate.